

THE CHAPBOOK

(A MONTHLY MISCELLANY)

No 14

August 1920



ARIA DA CAPO

(A PLAY IN ONE ACT)

By

Edna St Vincent Millay

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

THE CHAPBOOK

[A MONTHLY MISCELLANY]

POETRY AND DRAMA : a quarterly periodical, appeared four times in 1913 and four times in 1914. Then its publication was suspended on account of the war.

Its object was to provide a complete record of the poetry and drama of the day.

Its place has been filled since the war by other periodicals planned on similar lines.

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ARIA DA CAPO

(A Play in One Act)

BY

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

THE CHAPBOOK

(A Monthly Miscellany)

No. 14. AUGUST 1920

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It has already been produced by:

The Provincetown Players' Theatre, New York City

The Boston Community Players, Boston, Mass.

The Vagabond Theatre, Baltimore

The Little Theatre, Saint Louis.

ARIA DA CAPO

PERSONS

Pierrot.

Columbine.

Cothurnus, masque of Tragedy.

<i>Thyrsis</i>	} <i>two shepherds.</i>
<i>Corydon</i>	

SCENE : *A stage.*

(The curtain rises on a stage set for a Harlequinade, a merry black and white interior. Directly behind the footlights, and running parallel with them, is a long table, covered with a gay black and white cloth, on which is spread a banquet. At the opposite ends of this table, seated on delicate thin-legged chairs with high backs, are Pierrot and Columbine, dressed according to the tradition, excepting that Pierrot is in lilac and Columbine in pink. They are dining.)

Col : Pierrot, a macaroon ! I cannot *live*
Without a macaroon !

Pier : My only love,
You are so intense ! . . . Is it Tuesday, Columbine ? . . .
I'll kiss you if it's Tuesday.

Col : It is Wednesday,
If you must know. . . . Is this my artichoke,
Or yours ?

Pier : Ah, Columbine—as if it mattered !
Wednesday. . . . Will it be Tuesday, then, to-morrow,
By any chance ?

Col : To-morrow will be—— Pierrot,
That isn't funny !

Pier : I thought it rather nice.
Well, let us drink some wine and lose our heads
And love each other.

Col : Pierrot, don't you love
Me now ?

Pier : La, what a woman ! How should I know ?
Pour me some wine : I'll tell you presently.

Col : Pierrot, do you know, I think you drink too much.

Pier : Yes, I dare say I do. . . . Or else too little.
It's hard to tell. You see, I am always wanting
A little more than what I have,—or else
A little less. There's something wrong. My dear,
How many fingers have you ?

Col : La, indeed,
How should I know ?—It always takes me one hand
To count the other with. It's too confusing.
Why ?

Pier : Why ?—I am a student, Columbine ;
And search into all matters.

Col : La, indeed ?—
Count them yourself, then !

Pier : No. Or, rather, *nay*.
'Tis of no consequence. . . . I am become

A painter, suddenly,—and you impress me—
Ah, yes !—six orange bull's-eyes, four green pin-wheels,
And one magenta jelly-roll,—the title
As follows : *Woman Taking in Cheese from Fire-Escape.*

Col : Well, I like that ! So that is all I've meant
To you !

Pier : Hush ! All at once I am become
A pianist. I will image you in sound . . .
On a new scale . . . without tonality . . .
Vivace senza tempo senza tutto . . .
Title : Uptown Express at Six O'clock.
Pour me a drink.

Col : Pierrot, you work too hard.
You need a rest. Come on out into the garden
And sing me something sad.

Pier : Don't stand so near me !
I am become a socialist. I love
Humanity ; but I hate people. Columbine,
Put on your mittens, child ; your hands are cold.

Col : My hands are *not* cold !

Pier : Oh, I am sure they are.
And you must have a shawl to wrap about you,
And sit by the fire.

Col : Why, I'll do no such thing !
I'm hot as a spoon in a tea-cup !

Pier : Columbine,
I'm a philanthropist. I know I am,
Because I feel so restless. Do not scream,
Or it will be the worse for you !

- Col :* Pierrot,
My vinaigrette ! I cannot live without
My vinaigrette !
- Pier :* My only love, you are
So fundamental ! . . . How would you like to be
An actress, Columbine ?—I am become
Your manager.
- Col :* Why, Pierrot, *I* can't act.
- Pier :* Can't act ! Can't act ! La, listen to the woman !
What's that to do with the price of furs ?—You're blonde,
Are you not ?—You have no education, have you ?—
Can't act ! You under-rate yourself, my dear !
- Col :* Yes, I suppose I do.
- Pier :* As for the rest,
I'll teach you how to cry, and how to die,
And other little tricks ; and the house will love you
You'll be a star by five o'clock . . . that is,
If you will let me pay for your apartment.
- Col :* Let you ?—well, that's a good one ! Ha ! ha ! ha !
But why ?
- Pier :* But why ?—well, as to that, my dear,
I cannot say. It's just a matter of form.
- Col :* Pierrot, I'm getting tired of caviar
And peacocks' livers. Isn't there something else
That people eat ?—some humble vegetable
That grows in the ground ?
- Pier :* Well, there are mushrooms.
- Col :* Mushrooms !
That's so ! I had forgotten . . . mushrooms . . .
mushrooms . . .
I cannot *live* with— . . . How do you like this gown ?

Pier : Not much. I'm tired of gowns that have the waist-line
About the waist, and the hem around the bottom,—
And women with their breasts in front of them !—
Zut and ehé ! Where does one go from here !

Col : Here's a persimmon, love. You always liked them.

Pier : I am become a critic ; there is nothing
I can enjoy. . . . However, set it aside ;
I'll eat it between meals.

Col : Pierrot, do you know,
Sometimes I think you're making fun of me.

Pier : My love, by yon black moon, you wrong us both.

Col : There isn't a sign of a moon, Pierrot.

Pier : Of course not.
There never was. " Moon " 's just a word to swear by.
" Mutton " !—now *there's* a thing you can lay the hands
on,
And set the tooth in ! Listen, Columbine :
I always lied about the moon and you.
Food is my only lust.

Col : Well, eat it, then,
For heaven's sake, and stop your silly noise !
I haven't heard the clock tick for an hour.

Pier : It's ticking all the same. If you were a fly,
You would be dead by now. And if I were a parrot
I could be talking for a thousand years !

(*Enter Cothurnus.*)

Pier : Hello, what's this, for God's sake ?—What's the matter ?
Say, whadda you mean ?—get off the stage, my friend,
And pinch yourself,—you're walking in your sleep !

Coth : I never sleep.

Pier : Well, anyhow, clear out.
You don't belong on here. Wait for your own scene !
Whadda you think this is,—a dress-rehearsal ?

Coth : Sir, I am tired of waiting. I will wait
No longer.

Pier : Well, but what are you going to do ?
The scene is set for me !

Coth : True, sir ; yet I
Can play the scene.

Pier : Your scene is down for later !

Coth : That, too, is true, sir ; but I play it now.

Pier : Oh, very well !—Anyway, I am tired
Of black and white. At least, I think I am.

(*Exit Columbine.*)

Yes, I am sure I am. I know what I'll do ! . . .
I'll go and strum the moon, that's what I'll do . . .
Unless, perhaps, . . . you never can tell . . . I may be,
You know, tired of the moon. Well, anyway,
I'll go find Columbine—and when I find her,
I will address her thus : “ *Ehé, Pierrette !* ”—
There's something in that.

(*Exit Pierrot.*)

Coth : You, Thyrsis ! Corydon !
Where are you ?

Thyr : Sir, we are in our dressing-room.

Coth : Come out and do the scene.

Cory : You are mocking us !—
The scene is down for later.

Thyr : How gently in the silence, Corydon,
Our sheep go up the bank. They crop a grass
That's yellow where the sun is out, and black
Where the clouds drag their shadows. Have you
noticed
How steadily, yet with what a slanting eye
They graze ?

Cory : As if they thought of other things.
What say you, Thyrsis, do they only question
Where next to pull ?—Or do their far minds draw them
Thus vaguely north of west and south of east ?

Thyr : One cannot say. . . . The black lamb wears its burdocks
As if they were a garland,—have you noticed ?—
Purple and white—and drinks the bitten grass
As if it were a wine.

Cory : I've noticed that.
What say you, Thyrsis, shall we make a song
About a lamb that thought himself a shepherd ?

Thyr : Why, yes !—that is, why,—no. (I have forgotten
My line.)

Coth (prompting) : “ I know a game worth two of that.”

Thyr : Oh, yes. . . . I know a game worth two of that :
Let's gather rocks, and build a wall between us ;
And say that over there belongs to me
And over here to you !

Cory : Why,—very well :
And say you may not come upon my side
Unless I say you may !

Thyr : Nor you on mine !
And if you should, 'twould be the worse for you !

(*They weave a wall of coloured crêpe paper ribbons from the centre front to the centre back of the stage, fastening the ends to Columbine's chair in front and to Pierrot's chair in the back.*)

Cory : Now there's a wall a man may see across,
But not attempt to scale.

Thyr : An excellent wall.
Come, let us separate, and sit alone
A little while, and lay a plot whereby
We may outdo each other. (*They seat themselves on opposite sides of the wall.*)

Pier (*off stage*) : Ehé, Pierrette !

Col (*off stage*) : My name is Columbine ! Leave me alone !

Thyr (*coming up to the wall*) :
Corydon, after all, and in spite of the fact
I started it myself, I do not like this
So very much. What is the sense of saying
I do not want you on my side the wall ?
It is a silly game. I'd much prefer
Making the little song you spoke of making,
About the lamb, you know, that thought himself
A shepherd !—what do you say ?

(*Pause.*)

Cory (*at the wall*) : I have forgotten
The line.

Coth (*prompting*) : “ How do I know this isn't a trick ”

Cory : Oh, yes. . . . How do I know this isn't a trick
To get upon my land ?

Thyr : Oh, Corydon,
You *know* it's not a trick. I do not like
The game, that's all. Come over here, or let me
Come over there.

Cory : It is a clever trick
To get upon my land. (*Sits himself as before.*)

Thyr : Oh, very well ! (*Seats himself as before.*)
(*To himself*) : I think I never knew a sillier game.

Cory : (*coming up to the wall*) :
Oh, Thyrsis, just a minute !—all the water
Is on your side the wall, and the sheep are thirsty.
I hadn't thought of that.

Thyr : Oh, hadn't you ?

Cory : Why, what do you mean ?

Thyr : What do I mean ?—I mean
That I can play a game as well as you can.
And if the pool is on my side, it's on
My side, that's all.

Cory : You mean you'd let the sheep
Go thirsty ?

Thyr : Well, they're not my sheep. My sheep
Have water enough.

Cory : *Your* sheep ! You are mad to call them
Yours—mine—they are all one flock ! Thyrsis, you *can't*
mean
To keep the water from them, just because
They happen to be grazing over here
Instead of over there, when we set the wall up ?

Thyr : Oh, can't I ?—wait and see !—And if you try
To lead them over here you'll wish you hadn't !

Cory : I wonder how it happens all the water
Is on your side. . . . I'll say you had an eye out
For lots of little things, my innocent friend,

When I said, " Let us make a song," and you said,
" I know a game worth two of that " !

Col (off stage) : Pierrot,
D'you know, I think you must be getting old,
Or fat, or something,—stupid, anyway !—
Can't you put on some other kind of collar ?

Thyr : You know as well as I do, Corydon,
I never thought of anything of the kind.
Don't you ?

Cory : I do not.

Thyr : Don't you ?

Cory : Oh, I suppose so.
Thyrsis, let's drop this—what do you say ?—it's only
A game, you know . . . we seem to be forgetting
It's only a game . . . a pretty serious game
It's getting to be, when one of us is willing
To let the sheep go thirsty for the sake of it.

Thyr : I know it, Corydon.

(They reach out their arms to each other across the wall.)

Coth (prompting) : " But how do I know "

Thyr : Oh, yes. . . . But how do I know this isn't a trick
To water your sheep, and get the laugh on me ?

Cory : You can't know, that's the difficult thing about it.
Of course,—you can't be sure—you have to take
My word for it,—and I know just how you feel.
But one of us has to take a risk, or else,
Why, don't you see ?—the game goes on forever ! . . .
It's terrible, when you stop to think of it. . . .
Oh, Thyrsis, now for the first time I feel

This wall is actually a wall, a thing
Come up between us, shutting me away
From you. . . . I do not know you any more !

Thyr : No, don't say that ! Oh, Corydon, I'm willing
To drop it all, if you will ! Come on over
And water your sheep ! It is an ugly game.
I hated it from the first. . . . How did it start ?

Cory : I do not know . . . I do not know. . . . I think
I am afraid of you !—You are a stranger !
I never set eyes on you before ! “ Come over
And water my sheep,” indeed !—They'll be more thirsty
Than they are now before I bring them over
Into your land, and have you mixing them up
With yours, and calling them yours, and trying to keep
them !

(Enter Columbine.)

Col (to Cothurnus) : Glummy, I want my hat.

Thyr : Take it and go.

Col : Take it and go, indeed ! Is it my hat,
Or isn't it ? Is this my scene, or not ?
Take it and go ! Really, you know, you two
Are awfully funny ! *(Exit.)*

Thyr : Corydon, my friend,
I'm going to leave you now, and whittle me
A pipe, or sing a song, or go to sleep.
When you have come to your senses, let me know.

(Goes back to where he has been sitting, lies down and sleeps.)

*(Corydon, going back to where he has been sitting, stumbles over
bowl of coloured confetti and coloured paper ribbons.)*

Cory : Why, what is this ?—Red stones—and purple stones—
And stones stuck full of gold !—The ground is full
Of gold and coloured stones ! . . . I'm glad the wall
Was up before I found them ! Otherwise
I should have had to share them ! As it is,
They all belong to me. . . . Unless—

(He goes to wall and digs up and down the length of it, to see if there are jewels on the other side.)

None here—

None here—none here—They all belong to me ! *(Sits.)*

Thyr (awakening) : How curious ! I thought the little black
lamb

Came up and licked my hair ! I saw the wool
About its neck as plain as anything !
It must have been a dream. The little black lamb
Is on the other side of the wall, I'm sure.

(Goes to wall and looks over. Corydon is seated on the ground, tossing the confetti up into the air and catching it.)

Hello, what's that you've got there, Corydon ?

Cory : Jewels.

Thyr : Jewels ?—And where did you ever get them ?

Cory : Oh, over here.

Thyr : You mean to say you found them
By digging around in the ground for them ?

Cory (unpleasantly) : No, Thyrsis.
By digging down for water for my sheep.

Thyr : Corydon, come to the wall a minute, will you ?
I want to talk to you.

Cory : I haven't time.
I'm making me a necklace of red stones.

Thyr : I'll give you all the water that you want
For one of those red stones,—if it's a good one.

Cory : Water ?—what for ?—what do I want of water ?

Thyr : Why, for your sheep !

Cory : My sheep ?—I'm not a shepherd !

Thyr : Your sheep are dying of thirst.

Cory : Man, haven't I told you
I can't be bothered with a few untidy
Brown sheep all full of burdocks ?—I'm a merchant,
That's what I am ! And if I set my mind to it,
I dare say I could be an emperor !

(*To himself.*)

Wouldn't I be a fool to spend my time
Watching a flock of sheep go up a hill
When I have these to play with ?—when I have these
To think about ?—I can't make up my mind
Whether to buy a city, and have a thousand
Beautiful girls to bathe me, and be happy
Until I die ; or build a bridge, and name it
The Bridge of Corydon,—and be remembered
After I'm dead.

Thyr : Corydon, come to the wall,
Won't you ?—I want to tell you something.

Cory : Hush !
Be off ! Be off ! Go finish your nap, I tell you !

Thyr : Corydon, listen ; if you don't want your sheep,
Give them to me.

Cory : Be off. Go finish your nap.
A red one—and a blue one—and a red one—
And a purple one—give you my sheep, did you say ?—
Come, come ! What do you take me for, a fool ?
I've a lot of thinking to do,—and while I'm thinking,
The sheep might just as well be over here
As over there. . . . A blue one—and a red one—

Thyr : But they will die !

Cory : And a green one—and a couple
Of white ones, for a change.

Thyr : Maybe I have
Some jewels on my side.

Cory : And another green one—
Maybe, but I don't think so. You see, this rock
Isn't so very wide. It stops before
It gets to the wall. It seems to go quite deep,
However.

Thyr (with hatred) : I see.

Col (off stage) : Look, Pierrot, there's the moon !

Pier (off stage) : Nonsense !

Thyr : I see.

Col (off stage) : Sing me an old song, Pierrot,—
Something I can remember.

Pier (off stage) : Columbine,
Your mind is made of crumbs,—like an escallop

Of oysters,—first a layer of crumbs, and then
An oystery taste, and then a layer of crumbs.

Thyr : I find no jewels . . . but I wonder what
The root of this black weed would do to a man
If he should taste it. . . . I have seen a sheep die,
With half the stalk still drooling from its mouth.
'Twould be a speedy remedy, I should think,
For a festered pride and a feverish ambition.
It has a curious root. I think I'll hack it
In little pieces . . . first I'll get me a drink ;
And then I'll hack that root in little pieces
As small as dust, and see what the colour is
Inside.

(Goes to bowl on floor.)

The pool is very clear. I see
A shepherd standing on the brink, with a red cloak
About him, and a black weed in his hand. . . .
'Tis I.

(Kneels and drinks.)

Cory (coming to wall) :

Hello, what are you doing, Thyrsis ?

Thyr : Digging for gold.

Cory :

I'll give you all the gold
You want if you'll give me a bowl of water.
If you don't want too much, that is to say.

Thyr : Ho, so you've changed your mind ?—It's different,
Isn't it, when you want a drink yourself ?

Cory : Of course it is.

Thyr : Well, let me see . . . a bowl
Of water. . . . Come back in an hour, Corydon . . .
I'm busy now.

Cory : Oh, Thyrsis, give me a bowl
Of water,—and I'll fill the bowl with jewels
And bring it back !

Thyr : Be off, I'm busy now.

(He catches sight of the weed, picks it up and looks at it,
unseen by Corydon.)

Wait!—Pick me out the finest stones you have . . .
I'll bring you a drink of water presently.

Cory (goes back and sits down, with the jewels before him) :
A bowl of jewels is a lot of jewels.

Thyr (chopping up the weed) :
I wonder if it has a bitter taste.

Gory : There's sure to be a stone or two among them
I have grown fond of, pouring them from one hand
Into the other.

Thyr : I hope it doesn't taste
Too bitter, just at first.

Cory : A bowl of jewels
Is far too many jewels to give away . . .
And not get back again.

Thyr : I don't believe
He'll notice. He's too thirsty. He'll gulp it down
And never notice.

Cory : There ought to be some way
To get them back again. . . . I could give him a neck-
lace,
And snatch it back, after I'd drunk the water,
I suppose. . . . Why, as for that, of course, a *neck-*
lace . . .

(He puts two or three of the coloured tapes together and tries their strength by pulling them, after which he puts them around his neck and pulls them, gently, nodding to himself. He gets up and goes to the wall, with the coloured tapes in his hands. Thyrsis, in the meantime, has poured the powdered root—black confetti—into the pot which contained the flower and filled it up with wine from the punch-bowl on the floor. He comes to the wall at the same time, holding the bowl of poison.)

Thyr : Come get your bowl of water, Corydon.

Cory : Ah, very good !—and for such a gift as that
I'll give you more than a bowl of unset stones.
I'll give you three long necklaces, my friend.
Come closer. Here they are.

(Puts the ribbons about Thyrsis' neck.)

Thyr (putting bowl to Corydon's mouth) :

I'll hold the bowl
Until you've drunk it all.

Cory : Then hold it steady.
For every drop you spill I'll have a stone back
Out of this chain.

Thyr : I shall not spill a drop.

(Corydon drinks, meanwhile beginning to strangle Thyrsis.)

Thyr : Don't pull the string so tight.

Cory : You're spilling the water.

Thyr : You've had enough—you've had enough—stop pulling
The string so tight !

Cory : Why, that's not tight at all . . .
How's this ?

Thyr (drops bowl) :
You're strangling me ! Oh, Corydon !
It's only a game !—and you are strangling me !

Cory : It's only a game, is it ?—Yet I believe
You've poisoned me in earnest !

*(Writhes, and pulls the strings tighter, winding
them about Thyrsis' neck.)*

Thyr : Corydon ! *(Dies.)*

Cory : You've poisoned me in earnest. . . . I feel so cold . . .
So cold . . . this is a very silly game . . .
Why do we play it ?—let's not play this game
A minute more . . . let's make a little song
About a lamb. . . . I'm coming over the wall,
No matter what you say,—I want to be near you . . .

*(Groping his way, with his arms wide before him, he strides
through the frail papers of the wall without knowing it, and con-
tinues seeking for the wall straight across the stage.)*

Where is the wall ?

*(Gropes his way back, and stands very near
Thyrsis, without knowing it ; he speaks slowly.)*

There isn't any wall,

I think.

(Takes a step forward, his foot touches Thyrsis' body, and he falls down beside him.)

Thyrsis, where is your cloak?—just give me
A little bit of your cloak! . . .

(Draws corner of Thyrsis' cloak over his shoulders, falls across Thyrsis' body, and dies.)

(Cothurnus closes the prompt-book with a bang, arises matter-of-factly, comes down stage, and places the table over the two bodies, drawing down the cover so that they are hidden to any actors on the stage, but visible to the audience, pushing in their feet and hands with his boot.)

(He goes towards the back, and, turning his back to the audience, claps his hands twice.)

Coth : Strike the scene !

(Exit Cothurnus.)

(Enter Pierrot and Columbine.)

Pier : Don't puff so, Columbine !

Col : Lord, what a mess
This set is in ! If there's one thing I hate
Above everything else,—even more than getting my feet
wet—
It's clutter !

(They rearrange their chairs as before, at ends of table.)

He might at least have left the scene
The way he found it . . . don't you say so, Pierrot ?

(Picks up punch bowl from floor.)

Pier : Well, I don't know. I think it rather diverting
The way it is.

(*Yawns, picks up confetti bowl.*)

Shall we begin ?

Col : (Screams) My God !
What's that there under the table ?

Pier : It is the bodies
Of the two shepherds from the other play.

Col (slowly) :
How curious to strangle him like that,
With coloured paper ribbons.

Pier : Yes, and yet
I dare say he is just as dead.

(*Pause.*) (*Calls*) :

Cothurnus,
Come drag these bodies out of here ! We can't
Sit down and eat with two dead bodies lying
Under the table ! . . . The audience wouldn't stand for
it !

Coth (off stage) :
What makes you think so ?—Pull down the table-cloth
On the other side, and hide them from the house,
And play the farce. The audience will forget.

Pier : That's so. Give me a hand there, Columbine.

(*Pierrot and Columbine pull down the table-cover in such a way that the two bodies are hidden from the house, then merrily set their bowls back on the table, draw up their chairs, and begin the play exactly as before, speaking even more rapidly and artificially.*)

Col : Pierrot, a macaroon,—I cannot *live*
Without a macaroon !

Pier : My only love,
You are *so* intense ! . . . Is it Tuesday, Columbine ?
I'll kiss you if it's Tuesday.

(*Curtains begin to close slowly.*)

Col : It is Wednesday
If you must know. . . . Is this my artichoke
Or yours ?

Pier : Ah, Columbine, as if it mattered !
Wednesday. . . . Will it be Tuesday, then, to-morrow,
By any chance ? . . .

[CURTAIN.]



1920.

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